STEP BY STEP THROUGH THE
NEW TESTAMENT

THOMAS D. LEA
TOM HUDSON

LifeWay
Biblical Solutions for Life
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LifeWay Press®
Nashville, Tennessee
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The Authors

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Thomas was widely used as a conference leader and teacher at state and national conference centers, and he wrote for journals and denominational publications. He was the author of How to Study Your Bible and coauthor of MasterDesign: Your Calling as a Christian.

TOM HUDSON is the author of the learning activities in Step by Step Through the New Testament and also for the companion study Step by Step Through the Old Testament. Tom is a Biblical Studies Designer in the Adult Sunday School Ministry Department of LifeWay Christian Resources. He joined LifeWay in January 1986 after 21 years as pastor of Oak Forest Baptist Church in Jackson, Mississippi. He also has served as pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Anaconda, Montana, and assistant pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Jackson, Mississippi. While in Mississippi, he served in numerous positions in the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Tom, who is a native of Jackson, Mississippi, is a graduate of Mississippi College and holds a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctor of ministry degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.
Introduction

Step by Step Through the New Testament is an in-depth study designed to provide an overview of the characters and themes of the New Testament. This course has the following educational characteristics.

- Participants interact with this self-paced workbook for 30 to 60 minutes each day and complete life-related learning activities.
- Participants meet for a 1½- to 2-hour small-group learning session each week.
- The course leader (or facilitator) guides group members to reflect on and discuss what they have studied during the week and then make practical application of the study to real life. This small group becomes a support group for participants as they help one another understand and apply the Scriptures to life.

**Studying Step by Step Through the New Testament**

- During the next 13 weeks we will—
  1. *examine* the nature of the New Testament;
  2. *study* the world of the New Testament;
  3. *investigate* the text of the New Testament;
  4. *identify* the authors of the New Testament;
  5. *explore* the contents of the New Testament;

**An In-Depth Study**

**Six Features in New Testament Study**

**One Lesson at a Time**

*Step by Step Through the New Testament* is different from most books in that it is not intended simply to be read from cover to cover. To get the most out of this course, you must take your time by studying only one day's lesson at a time. Do not try to study through several lessons in a single day. You need time to incorporate these thoughts into your understanding and practice. Do not skip any of the learning activities. These are designed to help you develop a framework for understanding and applying the New Testament.

**Do All Learning Activities**

Learning activities will begin (like this paragraph) with a leaf indicating indented type. Follow the instructions given. After you have completed the activity, you will return to the content.

Normally you will be given answers at the bottom of the page, so you can check your own work. Write your own answer before reading mine. Sometimes your response to the activity will be your own response or opinion, and no right or wrong answer can be given. If you have difficulty with an activity or you question the answers given, write a note about your concern in the margin. Discuss it with your leader or small group.
Study with Small Group

Once each week you should attend a small-group session designed to help you discuss the content you studied the previous week, share insights and testimonies, encourage one another, and pray together. Small groups should not have more than 10 members for maximum effectiveness. Larger groups will experience less closeness, less intimate sharing, more absenteeism, and more dropouts. If more than 10 people want to study the course, enlist additional leaders for each group of 6 to 10.

Enlist Your Friends

If you have already started studying *Step by Step Through the New Testament* alone, enlist a few friends to study through the course with you. You will discover that others can help you learn and apply the teachings of this course. You will miss much of the intended learning from this course apart from a small-group study.

Read the New Testament

As you study the New Testament step-by-step during these next 13 weeks, reading the New Testament itself will be most helpful. On each unit page you will find suggested New Testament readings for that week. By reading the passages indicated each week (averaging four chapters each day), you can complete the entire New Testament in 13 weeks.

Resources for *Step by Step Through the New Testament*

- Member Book: *Step by Step Through the New Testament* (item 001117273)

To order additional copies of this resource, write to LifeWay Church Resources Customer Service; One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113; fax 615.251.5933; phone toll free 800.458.2772; email orderentry@lifeway.com; order online at www.lifeway.com; or visit the LifeWay Christian Store serving you.

Similar resources are available for *Step by Step Through the Old Testament* by Waylon Bailey and Tom Hudson:
- Member book: *Step by Step Through the Old Testament* (item 001116311)
UNIT LEARNING GOAL: The study of this unit should help you understand the background of the events and writing of the New Testament. You will be able to:

- Describe the emphasis of pagan religions during the New Testament era.
- Recognize the vital role of the synagogue in Jewish religion.
- Define and describe writings not found in our Bible, such as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.
- List the main teachings of Jewish sects, such as Pharisees and Sadducees.
- Identify the criteria Christians used to determine the New Testament canon.
- Recall five principles of sound biblical interpretation.

PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF JESUS
Day 1

New Testament Background

UNIT 1

The Nature of the New Testament

The 27 books of the New Testament present the life of Christ and His continuing work through His church. It is about one-third the length of the Old Testament. The Old Testament has 39 books. The events of the Old Testament covered thousands of years of divine history, but the events of the New Testament covered less than a century.

The term New Testament means New Covenant, a contrast with the Old Covenant under which God dealt with Israel in anticipation of Christ's coming. The term "testament" usually refers to an agreement which goes into effect on the death of the one making the covenant. The death of Jesus put into effect the New Covenant (Heb. 9:15-17).

A. In the blanks to the left of each of the following items write OT for those that describe the Old Testament and NT for those that describe the New Testament. 1

___ 1. 39 books
___ 2. 27 books
___ 3. About one-third of the whole Bible
___ 4. Covers thousands of years
___ 5. Covers less than 100 years
___ 6. Looked forward to Christ's sacrifice
___ 7. Looked back on Christ's sacrifice
___ 8. Set forth God's New Covenant

B. Read Hebrews 9:15-17. Mark the following statements as T (true) or F (false):

___ 1. Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant.
___ 2. Christ died to set people free from their sins.
___ 3. A covenant or will is in force only after the person who made it dies.
___ 4. The death of Christ put the New Covenant into effect.

The Gospels refer to events of the earliest periods (6 B.C.-A.D. 29). The expansion of the church covers the period from A.D. 29 to 63 and includes the Books of Acts, Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians, Philemon, and James. The post-Acts period (A.D. 63-96) is seen in First and Second Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, First and Second Peter, First, Second, and Third John, Jude, and Revelation.

Check the following items that you think state a good reason for studying the New Testament: 2

❑ 1. Learn the history of the rise of Christianity.
❑ 2. Verify secular history.
❑ 3. Learn the divinely inspired account of Christ's death and resurrection.
❑ 4. To be able to argue the Bible with other people.

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1. Answers to A: You probably do not need to check your answers, but just in case: 1, 4, and 6 are OT; the rest are NT. Answers to B: Right! All of these are true.
The New Testament World

The Political World. Rome had grown from an obscure village on the Tiber River to become the ruling empire of the New Testament world. The Roman government controlled the Jewish state. What we learn about both Rome and the Jewish nation can make us more informed Bible students.

Rome Founded
753 B.C.

Rome Captured Palestine
63 B.C.

The Roman Empire. Founded in 753 B.C., Rome was initially a union of small villages in its immediate area. Although originally ruled by a king, it grew to become a well-organized republic by the fifth century B.C. Rome made alliances with neighboring towns and villages and fought grueling wars with the Etruscans and other neighboring tribes. In 146 B.C. Rome extended its power over Carthage in North Africa and over Macedonia and the Grecian peninsula. In 63 B.C. Pompey extended control to Judea.

The men who ruled Rome used the Roman army to conquer the known world. They also enforced their power at home. Augustus Caesar crushed his opponents in 30 B.C., and eventually became the first Roman emperor. He served in office (27 B.C. to A.D. 14) at the birth of Christ, revived the state religion of Rome, reorganized the government for efficiency, and built many splendid buildings. Some Romans worshiped him as "Lord and God," but there is no evidence that Augustus sought such worship.

Augustus' adopted son, Tiberius, succeeded him and ruled from A.D. 14-37. He served during the time of Jesus' death. Gaius (Caligula), who was mentally unbalanced, ruled from A.D. 37-41 during Paul's early ministry, and Claudius, who ruled from A.D. 41-54, expelled Jews from Rome due to an outbreak of riots in Rome (Acts 18:2). He also made a determined effort to restore the Roman religion to its former place of importance.

The brutal and erratic Nero (A.D. 54-68) followed him. Nero carried out persecutions against Christians in Rome. Church tradition holds that Peter and Paul died in these persecutions. The emperor Domitian, who ruled from A.D. 81-96, insisted on being worshiped as "Lord and God." Many feel that his terrible persecutions against Christians are mentioned in Revelation (Rev. 2:13; 3:10).

As the Romans extended their power, they organized the conquered territories into two types of provinces. Relatively peaceful provinces were placed under the Roman Senate and had officers known as proconsuls (Acts 18:12). They were known as senatorial provinces. However, the emperor ruled directly over the more turbulent provinces. These imperial provinces had officers known as procurators (the term translated as "governor" refers to the procurator, see Matt. 27:11). Pontius Pilate is the best known of these procurators.

The Romans gave considerable liberty to the Roman rulers of the provinces, and in turn, the rulers usually did not interfere with the religious practices of the provinces. The reign of the Roman emperors of the New Testament period led to a time of peace known as the Pax Romana. The stability and unity of the civilized world under Rome made the spread of Christianity much easier.
Day 2

The Social World

UNIT 1

The Jewish State

Exiled to Babylon

Many Jews were exiled to Babylon. Others escaped to Egypt (Jer. 41—43). Babylon fell to the Persian king Cyrus in 538 B.C. In his first year Cyrus issued a decree allowing all Jews to return to the Holy Land. He promised to pay for rebuilding the temple with money from the royal treasury (Ezra 6:1-5). A majority of the Jews preferred to remain in Babylon, but 42,000, mostly from Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, returned under the leadership of Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:5-11,2:64). These who returned began to rebuild the temple (Ezra 3:8-13), but opposition delayed its completion for over 20 years (Ezra 4).

42,000 returned

Ezra’s Group

In 458 B.C. another delegation of Jews, headed by Ezra the scribe (Ezra 7:1-10), set out for Jerusalem. Some 13 years later Nehemiah joined them (Neh. 2:1-10). He mobilized the people to rebuild the demolished wall of Jerusalem (Neh. 6:15-16). Nehemiah, aided by Ezra the scribe, also instituted strict applications of Jewish laws (Neh. 8:1-8). These Jews were strongly devoted to the Old Testament law.

Nehemiah’s Group

Alexander the Great

Beginning with victories in 334 B.C., Alexander the Great of Macedonia spread Greek culture, or Hellenism, over much of the Middle East. By the time he died

Place the following events in chronological order by placing 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the blanks on the left (1=earliest, 5=latest).³

___ A. Ezra led a delegation of Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem.
___ B. Ezra and Nehemiah led in developing a group of Jews strongly devoted to the Old Testament law.
___ C. Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon.
___ D. Sheshbazzar led 42,000 Jews back to the promised land.
___ E. Nehemiah mobilized the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall.

UNIT 1

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

While this unit is primarily an introduction to the New Testament, keep in mind that this material is directly related to your goal of more accurately understanding this part of God’s Word. As I read the New Testament, I always ask the Lord to use His Word to work in my life in the two following ways. If this is your desire, check the boxes and make this your prayer to Him.

❑ Lord, as I study the New Testament, use the truth of Your Word to free me from all that would hinder Your work in my life (John 8:32).
❑ Lord, use Your Word in my life as “a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” so that You may lead and guide me to accomplish your will (Ps. 119:105).